

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated June 24, 2008. Claims 1 to 15 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 11, 14 and 15 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 5 and 7 to 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0046065 (Furukawa) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,134,568 (Tonkin) and further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0206314 (Tanimoto). Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Furukawa in view of Tonkin in view of Tanimoto and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,128,451 (Fukuchi). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns employing a plurality of printing devices for processing a printing job. In one aspect of the invention, a process flow list is used that is a list in which a plurality of procedures which constitute the printing job are listed in the order of execution, and wherein the plurality of procedures include a work procedure in which a user moves the print product printed by a first device from the first device to a second device and process procedures.

Such a characteristic feature allows a users to easily confirm or understand that a plurality of procedures constitute the print job and include a work procedure in which the user moves the print product printed by the first device from the first device to the second device and allows the user to utilize a device combination including a first device and a second device which executes a process using a print product printed by the first device. As the result, the user can effectively handle the printing job using the plurality of printing devices.

Turning to specific claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to a printing control apparatus which performs a printing process employing a plurality of printing devices. The apparatus includes a printing attribute acquisition unit configured to acquire an attribute of a printing job to be processed; an adaptive environment determination unit configured to obtain a device combination capable of executing the printing job based on performance information representing at least performance of each of the plurality of printing devices and the acquired attribute of the printing job, the device combination including a first device and a second device which executes a process using a print product printed by the first device; and a display unit configured to display a process flow list representing a process flow to execute the printing job by employing the device combinations obtained by the adaptive environment determination unit. The process flow list is a list in which a plurality of procedures which constitute the printing job are listed in the order of execution, and the plurality of procedures include a work procedure in which a user moves the print product printed by the first device from the first device to the second device and process procedures to be performed by respective devices included in the device combination obtained by the adaptive environment determination unit.

Applicants submit that the cited references, namely Furukawa, Tonkin and Tanimoto, whether taken alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of the present invention. Specifically, the references fail to disclose or suggest an adaptive environment determination unit configured to obtain a device combination capable of executing the printing job based on performance information representing at least performance of each of the plurality of printing devices and the acquired attribute of the printing job, the device combination including a first device and a second device which executes a process using a print

product printed by the first device and a display unit configured to display a process flow list representing a process flow to execute the printing job by employing the device combinations obtained by the adaptive environment determination unit, wherein the process flow list is a list in which a plurality of procedures which constitute the printing job are listed in the order of execution, and wherein the plurality of procedures include a work procedure in which a user moves the print product printed by the first device from the first device to the second device and process procedures to be performed by respective devices included in the device combination obtained by said adaptive environment determination unit.

In contrast to the present invention, Furukawa merely discloses a host computer that functions to transmit print data over a local area network (LAN) with a broadcast address or a particular multicast address as the target address. The host computer also functions to detect which network printers on the network are capable of printing the subject print data. That is, before the host computer transmits the same print data simultaneously to a plurality of network printers using multicast transmission, the host computer 1 must determine which network printers are capable of reliably printing out the print data. For example, network printers that only understand PostScript cannot reliably print out print data in Printer Control Language (PCL), so the same print data cannot be transmitted to network printers that only understand PostScript and also to network computers that only understand PCL. In addition, the host computer investigates the present status of the printers. (See Furukawa, paragraphs [048] and [049]). However, Furukawa fails to disclose any printing procedures in which a print product printed by one printer is used for a process in another printer. That is, Furukawa does not disclose or suggest the device combination including a first device and a second device which executes a process using a print product printed by the first device as featured in Claim 1. Therefore, Furukawa cannot possibly

disclose or suggest obtaining a device combination capable of executing the printing job based on performance information representing at least performance of each of the plurality of printing devices and the acquired attribute of the printing job, a display unit configured to display a process flow list representing a process flow to execute the printing job by employing the device combinations, wherein the process flow list is a list in which a plurality of procedures which constitute the printing job are listed in the order of execution, and wherein the plurality of procedures include a work procedure in which a user moves the print product printed by the first device from the first device to the second device and process procedures to be performed by respective devices included in the device combination as featured in Claim 1.

Furthermore, Tonkin has been reviewed by the Applicants and is not seen to cure the deficiencies of Furukawa. Tonkin merely disclose, in Fig. 4, enabling a user to specify assembly instructions for a document, preview the document as assembled and order the document. In Tonkin, a document creation window is displayed, information is input specifying the arrangement of the document. Upon user designation that the document specification is ready, the information is tested to determine whether it is valid, if not valid, an error message is displayed and the document specification can be revised. If the document specification is valid, a document image is generated and displayed to the user. However, Tonkin and Fukuchi are also silent about any printing procedures in which a print product printed by one printer is used to a process in another printer.

Finally Tanimoto also fails to supply that which is missing from Furukawa. Specifically, Tanimoto discloses a process in which a data result of one processing unit is used by another processing unit. (See Tanimoto, paragraphs [0016] to [0023].) However, the first processing unit 1 and the second processing unit 4 of Tanimoto are different from the devices of

the present invention. This is because the first processing unit 1 and the second processing unit 4 are not adaptively obtained from a plurality of processing units to perform a particular process. In Tanimoto , a process procedure to be achieved by the first processing unit 1 and the second processing unit 4 may not be fixed at the time when data to be processed is received by the first processing unit 1. Accordingly, the combination of the first processing unit 1 and the second processing unit 4 does not correspond to the first printing device and the second printing device of the present invention.

In light of these deficiencies in the cited references, Applicants submit that Claim 1 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Claims 11, 14 and 15 are directed to a method, a computer-readable medium and a computer program product, respectively, substantially in accordance with the apparatus of Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claims 11, 14 and 15 are also in condition for allowance.

The other pending claims in this application are each dependent from the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed allowable for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each dependent claim on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

CONCLUSION

No claim fees are believed due; however, should it be determined that additional claim fees are required, the Director is hereby authorized to charge such fees to Deposit Account 06-1205.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, CA office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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